

Please replace the paragraph bridging pages 6-7 with the following amended paragraph:

C2
 --Figure 3 is a view showing the arrangement of an ezrin-like domain and a Dbl homology (DH) domain, and comparisons among ezrin-like domains of human CDEP (SEQ ID NO: 23), ezrin (SEQ ID NO: 24), and band 4.1 (SEQ ID NO: 25), in which the residues conserved with respect to CDEP are indicated in bold type;--.

Please replace the paragraph at page 7, lines 2-5, with the following amended paragraph:

C3
 --Fig. 4 is a view showing comparisons among DH domain of human CDEP (SEQ ID NO: 26), human Dbl (SEQ ID NO: 27), rat Ost (SEQ ID NO: 28), mouse Ect2 (SEQ ID NO: 29), and human FGD1 (SEQ ID NO: 30), in which the residues conserved with respect to CDEP are indicated in bold type;--.

Please replace the paragraph at page 29, lines 12-21:

C4
 --Total RNA was extracted from each of layers, i.e, costal cartilage growth plate slices (a portion near the bone side was divided into three parts designated as G3, G2 and G1) and a resting cartilage layer (called R) of a 4-weeks-old male Japanese albino rabbit. The extract was examined for the expression level of CDEP mRNA by the RT-PCR method. The expression levels of type X collagen, alkaline phosphatase, and proteoglycan, differentiation markers of chondrocytes, in the respective layers were confirmed by RT-PCR;--.